

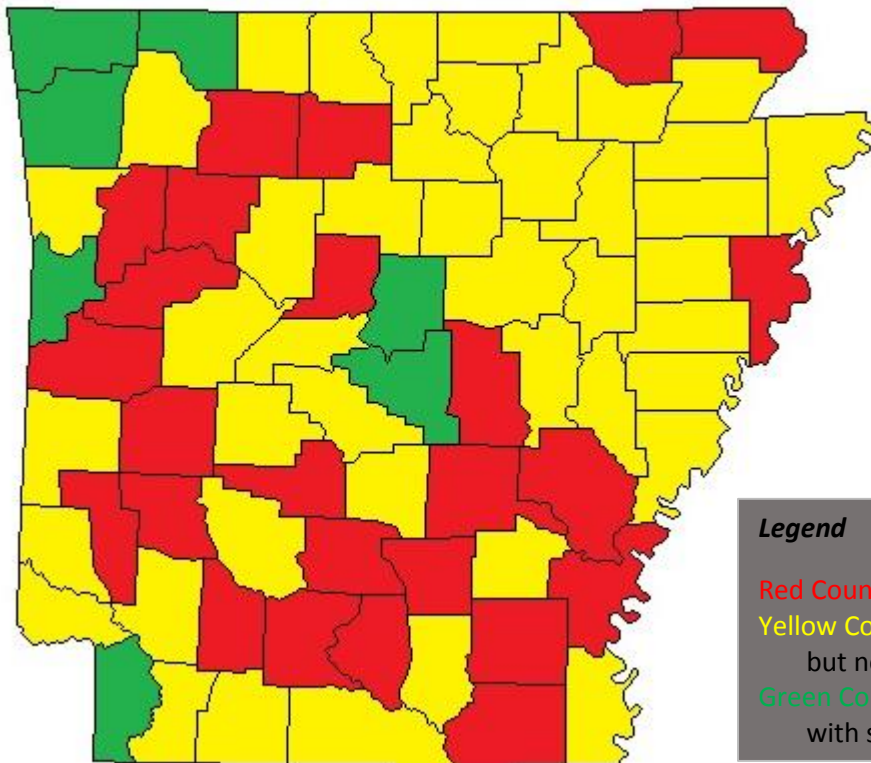
Arkansas County Government cannot be ‘Transparent’ when One-Third of them have no Web Presence

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For Arkansans to be able to insist upon and receive good government, we must have easily available information about county government finances. Currently Arkansas law requires that county governments make their financial status public *only* once per year, and *only* in the print newspaper with the largest circulation in the county. At a minimum, a county’s annual fiscal report could be available on-line, 24/7. Some Arkansas counties already do this. All of them easily could by using webpages already created by the state government. The computers, the websites, and the county data already exist. So how many counties have a web presence, and what information do they offer the public?

Arkansas



ACRE research reveals that 25 counties in Arkansas—a full one-third of all counties in the state—had no website for the county government in any form. Furthermore, only a handful of the remaining 50 Arkansas counties had any information relating to budgets, appropriations, or quorum court reports available on their website. Many of these webpages currently contain little more than the county government’s street address. Even fewer county websites posted up-to-date information.

This is distressing because more information leads to a more efficiently run government. County citizens can more easily keep public officials “honest,” limit the damage from well-intended policy mistakes that create more public

cost than public benefit, and assure themselves that tax money is being spent for their advantage, in the ways they see fit.

The solution is to increase, or create, county-government web presence for every county in Arkansas. The county government web presence would include county government financial data, available to the public anytime, on demand. A wonderful example of forward progress at the state level is *Transparency.Arkansas.gov*. A relevant and achievable goal would be for county government information to be available in just the same way.



About ACRE:

The Arkansas Center for Research in Economics (ACRE) is a university-based, nonprofit research and education organization that focuses on improving the lives of Arkansans by training students, by evaluating the state's policies, and by offering solutions in order to promote free markets and limited, transparent government. ACRE does not promote, advocate, support, or campaign for specific political parties or political candidates.

If you have questions or comments, or if you would like more information about this study or about ACRE and its endeavors, please contact ACRE's director David Mitchell (dmitchell@uca.edu).

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